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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 RANGOON 000206

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [BM](#) [NLD](#)  
SUBJECT: UNION DAY WRAP UP

Classified By: COM Carmen Martinez for Reasons 1.5 (B,D)

11. (C) SUMMARY: The GOB celebrated Burma's 57th Union Day with an official ceremony in Rangoon's People's Square, attended by high-level SPDC officials and their faithful minions. Diplomats were invited to a low-key MOFA event co-hosted by the Myanmar Asean Women's Friendship Association. The NLD held a morning observance at a local pagoda and then, in defiance of local authorities, marched in formation to the party's de facto national headquarters. The leading ethnic democracy coalition, the United Nationalities Alliance (UNA), hosted a commemorative dinner that attracted cease-fire groups and the NLD CEC. END SUMMARY.

NLD: At the Pagoda, in the Street, and on the Stump

12. (C) The NLD began its parallel Union Day commemoration on February 12 with a morning religious ceremony at the Sasana Gonyi Monastery, on the grounds of ASSK's favorite Rangoon pagoda. The five released members of the NLD's Central Executive Committee (CEC), representatives from the Committee to Represent the People's Parliament, U.S. and British diplomats, and about 400 NLD members attended the ceremony.

13. (C) At noon, all of the NLD members queued in pairs and marched peacefully several miles to CEC member U Than Tun's residence -- the NLD's de facto national headquarters. A truckload of military intelligence agents, police officers, and a local township SPDC official closely followed the procession, but did not interfere. OCMI photographers stationed every 50 meters along the route thoroughly documented the march with their long lenses.

14. (C) Upon the procession's arrival at U Than Tun's residence, CEC member U Soe Myint called for the release of ASSK and other detained NLD leaders and demanded that the GOB allow the five CEC members to meet ASSK at the earliest opportunity. MP-elect U Khun Myint Tun from Thaton Township, Mon State, read out the NLD's Union Day statement, calling for "the unity of all ethnic nationalities" and reiterating NLD policies of equality, autonomy, and cultural freedom.

Ethnics: Dinner With the UNA

15. (C) On the evening of Union Day, Shan Nationalities League for Democracy (SNLD) Chairman Hkun Htun Oo hosted a dinner for the ethnic democracy coalition, the United Nationalities Alliance (UNA). The event was attended by about 75 representatives from Kachin, Kayah, Karen, Chin Zomi, Mon, Burman, Rahkine, and Shan political parties, as well as political veterans, the NLD CEC, NLD MP's-elect, and U.S. Embassy representatives. Notably, this was the first time that major cease fire groups such as the KIO and the NMSP attended a political function with elected representatives of the political parties.

16. (SBU) The UNA distributed a statement calling for the release of political prisoners and a tripartite dialogue among the SPDC, the NLD, and ethnic groups as called for by the UNGA. The ethnics talked about a "second Panlong agreement," referring to the 1947 agreement reached between General Aung San and the ethnic minority groups. A Kachin representative commented that the SPDC will go forward with the road map and those who do not participate will be left behind.

Government: A Ceremonial Hoist

17. (C) The GOB held its official Union Day ceremony by hoisting the union flag at City Hall and holding an ethnic parade for selected guests at the People's Park. Among those invited were core USDA members and representatives of the election commission and sundry National Convention committees. In typical fashion for major national holidays, members of the general public were prohibited from attending and security was tight. Rangoon Division's SPDC military commander read a statement from SPDC Chairman Senior General Than Shwe urging support for the regime's road map. The Chairman himself later hosted a state dinner and uncharacteristically skipped his uniform and wore a traditional longyi and a traditional Burmese headdress.

16. (C) COMMENT: The NLD road march from the pagoda and the

public reading was a brave pushing-of-the-envelope, and it was good to see that the SPDC may be giving the NLD a tiny bit more latitude to operate. However, it would be worse for the democracy movement if the now-free CEC members were again imprisoned. The well attended UNA dinner highlights the level of cooperation ethnic nationalities have with each other and with the cease-fire groups and the NLD. END  
COMMENT.  
Martinez